

Carlisle Conservation Commission
February 24, 2011

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, Chair Guarino called the meeting to order in the Clark Room at the Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. Also present were Chair Elect Peter Burn, Commissioners Luke Ascolillo, Tom Brownrigg and Jen Bush, Debra Kimbrell Anderson and Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard.

FY12 Budget Update: Guarino provided an update relative to her discussion with FinCom at their February 14, 2011 meeting. In addition to requesting a level funded budget with the approved two percent COLA increase, FinCom had requested that the Commission also submit an alternative budget proposal that would include additional funding in order to replenish the rapidly depleting revolving fund accounts. Because the Commission uses their revolving fund accounts differently than other town boards and committees, there was discussion of the possibility of restructuring the ConsCom budget whereby it would be funded solely through General Fund appropriations and filing fees would go directly in to the town GF. Guarino said she was unable to be present at the end of the discussion when the final vote was taken relative to the Commission's request for an additional \$8,000 for the FY12 budget, but she was aware that FinCom had approved a substantially lesser amount. Guarino agreed to communicate the final approved appropriations to the Commission electronically once she confirms the figures with FinCom.

June Riverfest Celebration: The Annual Sunrise Canoe Trip event has been scheduled for Sunday, June 12, 2011 as part of the June Riverfest Celebration. Local wildlife expert Ken Harte has once again generously agreed to lead the trip. *Guarino moved to approve the Commission-sponsored annual Sunrise Canoe Trip and all voted in favor.* Several members of the Commission who had attended the event last year encouraged others to check it out, with Guarino recalling the highlight of the trip for her being the pit stop at the Riverview Restaurant for breakfast where she enjoyed the chocolate chip French toast.

Mannis Land Survey Update:

Willard reported having approached the Long Term Capital Requirements Committee (LTC) to determine whether they would be willing to fund the survey work previously identified as a priority by the Commission. Although the Committee was not willing to fund the initiative this year, they suggested investigating the possibility of CPA funding for the project. Ascolillo, who is the Commission's liaison to the CPC, agreed to pursue the possibility of obtaining the funding under the CPA open space preservation provision. Willard said she has contacted two additional engineering firms for estimates for the survey work as required under the Uniform Procurement Act for projects estimated to cost over \$5,000.

7:45 p.m. (DOA-284) Request for Determination, Continued

Applicant: Brendon Nunan

Project Location: 854 Maple Street

Project Description: installation of a hiking trail from Church Street to a trail to Banta Davis Field with work within the 100-foot Buffer Zone of a Bordering Vegetated Wetland and the 200-foot Riverfront Area

Guarino called the continued meeting to order under the provisions of the Wetlands Protection Act and the Carlisle Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Eagle Scout Brendon Nunan had presented his proposal at the Commission's previous meeting for permission to construct the hiking trail because the existing Banta Davis trail is often inaccessible to runners and walkers due to seasonal flooding of the old boardwalk.

Because the proposed trail would be built on municipal land, the meeting had been continued from February 10, 2011 in order to allow for a vote to be taken by the Board of Selectmen. The initiative received BOS approval. *Brownrigg moved to issue a Negative Determination citing Condition B3 for DOA-284 for construction of a trail as shown on the Plan, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.* Nunan agreed to provide a post construction report following completion of the project in the spring.

(DOA- 283) Request for Determination, Continued

Applicant: Peter Burn

Project Location: 223 Partridge Lane

Project Description: Removal of four white pine trees from the 100-foot Buffer Zone

Guarino opened the continued meeting under the provisions of the Wetlands Protection Act and the Carlisle Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Burn, who recused himself as he was the applicant for the project, had presented the Plan at the previous meeting, at which time the Commission was unable to vote due to the lack of a quorum. Burn had agreed to submit the RDA as a courtesy to his neighbor after having received a letter from him relative to several tall pines that are located within close proximity to his home, causing concerns for the safety of his family and his home. *Bush moved to issue a Negative Determination citing Condition B3 for DOA 283, Brownrigg seconded and all voted in favor.*

Trash Pickup: Following the retirement of Dick Metivier, who has provided trash pickup service to the Commission for over twenty years, the business was recently taken over by a new owner who has agreed to continue the service. The Commission currently provides trash barrels at Foss Farm, Towle Field, the Greenough Land and the Cranberry Bog. A discussion of whether the Commission should continue to provide the trash barrels or perhaps consider implementing a carry-in/carry-out policy will be revisited at some point in the future.

8:00 p.m. Farmers Meeting - Agricultural License Agreements and Annual Cranberry Bog Lease

Report and Planning: Guarino opened the discussion during which the Commission will receive a summary of the annual reports for the previous growing season and review the agricultural license agreements.

Fox Hill East: Dick Shohet of Mill Iron Farm provided a quick and concise recap on the previous growing season at Fox Hill, where he grows hay on approximately five acres of land using organic management practices (a.k.a. “Cheep Cheep Poultry Manure). His primary comment was, “I can’t tell you anything more than has been submitted with the report, it’s remarkably dull - I do the same thing every year and it works”.

Fox Hill West: John Bakewell and Kevin Brown were next to discuss their report for the previous growing season and review any new initiatives they may plan on implementing for the upcoming season. Their operations consist of three components, comprised of a 7,000 s.f. area used as a vegetable plot, a 5,000 s.f. grain field, which they added during the previous growing season, and a tree nursery where they care for approximately 75 fruit trees, 40 conifer trees and a dozen landscape specimens. They employ Integrated Pest Management practices including a three-year vegetable crop rotation schedule in order to control insect populations. Bakewell said that last year was tough because of the severe drought conditions, causing them to abandon the corn plot. They plan to go back to growing squash and melons during the upcoming season, a practice they have found to be the most successful and popular by far to date.

Relative to the field edge maintenance they had proposed for the previous season in order to control the heavily established buckthorn and poison ivy, they reported measurable success using a combination of herbicide treatments, mowing, and brush cutting.

Bisbee Land: George Fraser was next to discuss his hay growing operations during the previous season at the Bisbee Land. He reported having used approximately 300 lbs of fertilizer, yielding only one crop due to severe drought conditions, when he typically yields 400 bales encompassing two cuts. He pretty much summed up the season when he said, “No rain, no hay”. Relative to his ongoing maintenance work, Fraser received positive feedback for his assistance in keeping the field edges open and the brush at bay.

Cranberry Bog: Mark Duffy, who holds a twenty-year Agricultural Lease Agreement on the Cranberry Bog Conservation Land, reported conditions that allowed for a better cranberry crop this year, though it still did not meet his expectations. He hired a new Integrated Pest Management specialist last season that has extensive experience managing cranberry bogs in other locations in Massachusetts. Based on previous recommendations, Duffy and his crew went through the laborious process of re-digging the drainage ditches along the perimeter of the bog in order to improve drainage. He was pleased to report having received approval for some federal funding for repair of the failed flume on the dike, with the work to be done when conditions allow. There continue to be challenges relative to dogs at the bog. Unfortunately he said there are still many people do not pick up after their pets and often let them run free, on the bog often causing damage to the plants, despite increased signage discouraging these practices.

Foss Farm, Hutchins-Robbins, Fiske Meadow and Greenough Land: Duffy said he has been farming various parcels in Carlisle for over 23 years. In addition to the lands he uses in Carlisle for which he has submitted his Annual Report, Duffy said he also grows corn on various public lands in the towns of Acton, Chelmsford and Concord in order to support his dairy operation at Great Brook Farm State Park. He was pleased to announce that he had recently received federal funding for a new manure storage system, which will alleviate previous concerns related to the existing off-site manure storage system and will be much more environmentally friendly than what exists today.

Fisk Meadow: Duffy then addressed an issue that had been raised by a resident of Litchfield Drive relative to the field that runs from Litchfield Drive along Lowell Street to the Conservation Commission’s Fisk Meadow. Duffy stated that he had approached residents of Litchfield Drive who own slices of the field along Lowell Street and indicated his interest in farming the field. “It had been unused for a number of years and had subsequently grown over in weeds”, according to Duffy. After haying the field for the first season, he said he decided to put in corn the following year. At that time he said he was not aware that there would be an issue with this change until one of the landowners returned from an extended trip and informed him that they would appreciate having their portion of the field put back to hay, which would also be usable for feeding his cows. The Commission was made aware of the situation and had subsequently contacted Duffy to confirm that he would be complying with the landowners request. Duffy reported that at this point, the landowner has agreed to wait until the end of his agricultural license agreement with the town before requiring that the field be returned to hay.

LAND USE REQUESTS:

Towle Field Maple Tree Tapping: Pam Fielding Gore, President of the Board of Trustees of Gaining Ground, along with Farmer Kayle Boyle, were present to request a Land Use Permit to allow permission to tap ten maple trees at Towle Field for a second season. They reported a successful season last year with four different groups coming to observe the process, including several scout troops. An open invitation event that had been advertised in the *Carlisle Mosquito* was fairly well attended and they also gave a small presentation at the Gleason Public Library, where they have also been tapping seven maples. Gaining

Ground is a non-profit organic farm headquartered in Concord where they grow food and distribute it for hunger relief and at the same time provide for a meaningful volunteer experience. Fielding Gore reported that they distributed over 30,000 pounds of produce to food pantries from Ayer to Boston, including six families in Carlisle. *Guarino moved to issue a Land Use Permit to Gaining Ground for the purpose of tapping ten maple trees at Towle Field expiring April 1, 2012, with all voting in favor.*

Foss Farm - <1/4 Acre at Community Gardens: The Commission discussed a request submitted by resident John Foster for permission to use a small portion of the field that is not being used for agriculture that exists between the community gardens and the wildlife refuge for the purpose of growing mixed vegetable crops. It was noted that a discussion relative to the parcel in question occurred earlier in the meeting when farmer Mark Duffy had stopped planting corn in this area to provide more space for Community Gardens currently and in the future.. The Commission was also in agreement that in fairness to the other community gardeners, the person who tends that plot should be required to complete an application and accept the rules. *Guarino entertained a motion that the Commission's consideration of the application for the specified area at Foss Farm is that it is their understanding that the area is an established part of the Community Gardens and therefore should be maintained and used in the approved manner. The motion was moved Burn, seconded by Ascolillo and all voted in favor.*

Additional Requests:

Bisbee Field (2-3 acres): The applicant, Heidi Reinhard of Pastor Blacksmith Farm in Concord was not present for the discussion relative to her proposal to farm 2-3 acres on the Bisbee Land for the purpose of growing a combination of vegetables and grain. Guarino noted that the Commission has never had the situation when more than one individual has been interested in farming a piece of land previously. In light of this she said she had reviewed the Agricultural License Agreement and quoted the following for the benefit of those who may not be familiar with the language of the document: "when choosing among proposals, the commission considers favorably the fact that a proposed tenant is currently farming land to be leased the Commission wishes to promote stability in the use and management of the towns farmlands; experience suggests that the farmer who is in effect a long term partner in the management of a piece of town land will care for it more responsibly than one who has only a short term investment in the health of that piece." With that said and no comments or questions from the Commission, *Burn moved to issue the Agricultural License Agreement for the Bisbee Land to the current farmer, George Fraser, in accordance with the proposal submitted, Kimbrell Anderson seconded and all voted in favor.*

Kimbrell-Anderson moved to issue Agricultural License Agreements for all of the remaining requests in accordance with the proposals submitted and approved, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.

Agricultural License Agreement - Content Review: Guarino requested that the Commission allow time for a review on a future agenda of the current Agricultural License Agreement in order to determine whether some revisions may be in order, noting in particular that the current \$1 license fee may not be sufficient to cover the administrative costs associated with the process.

8:30 p.m. (DEP 125-0893) Notice of Intent, Continued Hearing

Applicant: The Rachel Webster Elliott Trust – 2004, Continued Hearing

Project Location: 291 River Road, Map 1 Parcels 1, 1A, 1B, 3, 3B

Project: Common Driveway project within 100-foot Buffer Zone of a Bordering Vegetated Wetland, within Bordering Vegetated Wetland and within the 100 & 200-foot Riverfront Area

The continued hearing was opened under the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Carlisle Wetlands Protection Bylaw and continued to March 24, 2011 at 8:30 p.m. at the applicant's request.

Land Use Permit Request: *Burn moved to issue a Land Use Permit to the Trails Committee for a Moonlight Trek to be held on March 19, 2011 to view the wildlife platform at the Benfield Conservation Land from 7 to 9 pm., Brownrigg seconded and all voted in favor.*

9:30 p.m. Foss Farm Community Gardens:

For the purpose of providing some background, Guarino explained that last year there were changes made to the Community Gardens structure, including the nomination of a Garden Manager and a comprehensive revision of the Community Gardens rules. These changes were implemented after the Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) had proposed a revision of the rules based on their research, together with feedback received from the community gardeners. The Commission has scheduled this time in order to give gardeners an opportunity to provide feedback based on their experiences over the past growing season with regard to how things worked. Guarino noted that other options for submitting comments have been made available for those gardeners who were unable to attend this discussion.

Guarino reported that the majority of the written comments submitted were very positive. Gardeners were pleased with many of the improvements made, including the establishment of email communications and distribution of a plot assignment maps. Several long-time gardeners spoke up in support of the changes that were implemented, particularly with regard to the positive changes that have resulted from efforts of the new Garden Manager, Jack O'Connor and his assistants Ed Humm and Carol Foster.

The tone of the discussion then changed when Assistant Garden Manager Ed Humm reiterated the concerns he had expressed in a previous email to the Commission and fellow garden managers relative to the practice of several gardeners tending more than the two plots allowed per household using friends and family to sign up for additional plots. In response to Humm's claim, one of the gardeners said they were merely helping friends who were unable to maintain their plots due to illness or disability. Guarino said it was her understanding that the garden rules state that there is a limit of 2 plots per household to be tended primarily by the members of the household assigned to that plot. She also noted that there are provisions for gardeners who, due to circumstances beyond their control, realize they can no longer tend their plot.

Addressing the growing popularity of the tending plots at the community gardens and with the limited number of plots available, Gale Constable said she had contacted the Commission relative to the possibility of finding other locations where larger scale gardening could be established thereby eliminating the issue of gardeners trying to tend more plots than are allowable. The Commission acknowledged having received her request and said they were in the process of working with LSC to determine other possible locations.

Responding to Humm's previous comments related to gardeners tending multiple plots on behalf of others, several gardeners said there is nothing to prevent them from helping each other, and that, if anything else, such actions actually help foster a sense of community at the gardens.

Burn said, that in his opinion, everybody can't define fairness in his or her own way. "If it's a community, there has to be some consensus about what is fair; obviously the Commission wants people to be able to help their friends; there is the feeling among some gardeners that the helping your friends argument was somehow abused to acquire more plots. Those of you who are on opposite sides of the fairness argument probably should accept the fact that each of you can't define what is fair in the eyes of the other person;

The commission wants there to be a community down there; we don't there to be a police state; but at the same we don't want people to be able to say, we don't have to play by the rules; there need to be rules or the community does not function effectively.

Following further extensive, sometimes heated, discussion, the Commission determined that a final resolution was clearly not going to be determined during the confines of the meeting. Guarino encouraged anyone who wants to provide additional information to do so, and told those in attendance that the commission would continue to look at the current rules to determine whether additional changes would be appropriate.

10:45 p.m. Burn moved to adjourn, Ascolillo seconded and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Hopkins
Administrative Assistant